

Albany Times Union
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Willowbrook Staff Protests Hirings

About 200 employes of the Willowbrook State School, Staten Island, came to Albany Friday to protest an agreement that would result in the rehiring of a doctor and a social worker fired earlier this month.

The agreement that would lead to reinstatement of Dr. Michael Wilkins and Mrs. Elizabeth Lee was worked out at an all-night meeting by Alan D. Miller, state mental hygiene commissioner, and Anthony Pinto, president of the Benevolent Parents, Society for Retarded Children of Willowbrook.

It provides that the department of mental hygiene and the parents work together to bring about a reconciliation between Jack Hammond, director of the school, and Wilkins and Lee.

THE TWO EMPLOYEES were apparently fired because they told newsmen about conditions at the institution.

Thomas Delaney, chapter president of the Civil Service Employees Association at Willowbrook, said in Albany Friday night that when the agreement was learned of in New York, "It took us 1½-hours to arrange a bus trip to Albany."

Delaney said the employes at the school who made the trip to Albany Friday are adamant for non-reinstatement.

Hammond said he fired Wilkins and Lee because they were "impossible to work with" but

the fired employes said they were dismissed because of their meeting with parents and their talks with newsmen.

DELANEY SAID Friday: "Dr. Hammon told me privately that he would not want to reinstate the two under any circumstances. . . . publicly he (Hammond) stated that he would not reinstate Wilkins and Lee unless superceded by a higher authority."

Delaney said the commissioner told protestors at a meeting held in the Mental Hygiene

Building on Holland Avenue that he has not superseded Dr. Hammon's decision to fire the two and has decided not to overrule Hammond.

Said Delaney, "If they are reinstated there is an excellent possibility there would be a walkout at Willowbrook."

Delaney said the employes are still in the process of trying to get a firm commitment from Miller that the two will not be rehired.

THE ALBANY PROTESTORS passed a resolution at the meet-

ing that Hammond not reinstate Wilkins and Lee and that he be publicly supported by Miller and Dr. Frederick Gruenberg, deputy commissioner of mental hygiene.

The group called for a telegram from the commissioners in regard to such support and that Miller go to Willowbrook to explain his position to all employes there.

The staff at Willowbrook was cut by about 900 last year because of Governor Rockefeller's belt-tightening program.



EXPLAINS HIS POSITION—Alan D. Miller, left, state commissioner of mental hygiene, states his position Friday in Albany on the firing of two state employes at the Willowbrook State School in New York City. Miller addressed about 200 employes of the school who came to Albany to protest an agreement to reinstate the two. (Staff Photo by Jack Madigan)